

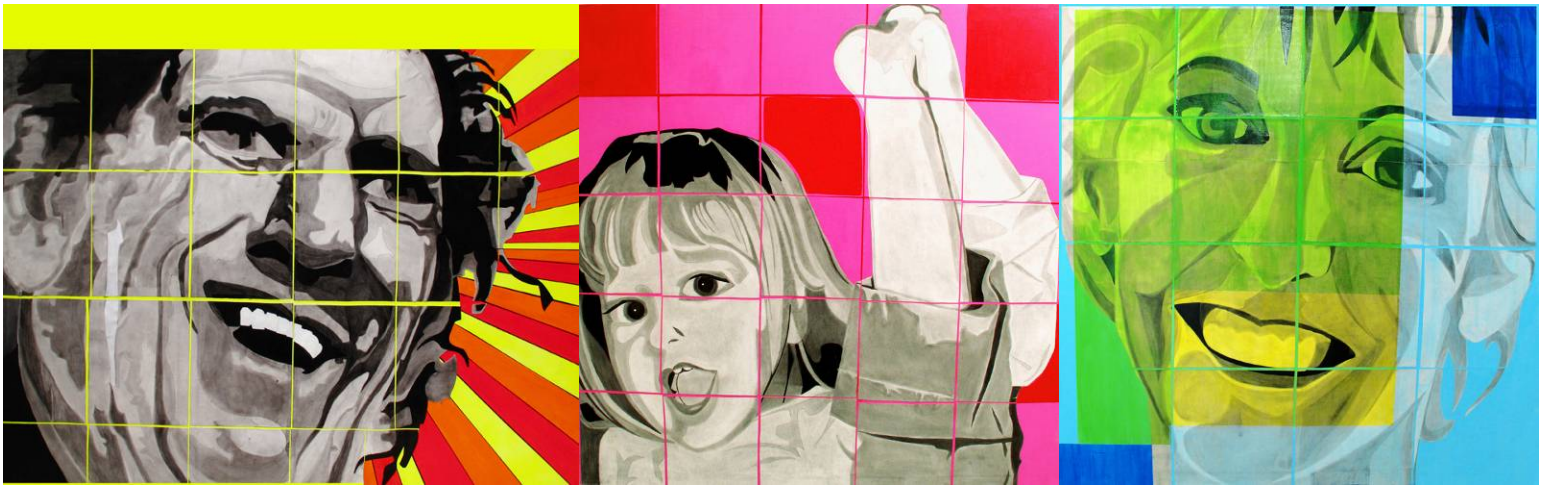
New York, March 2, 2012
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**ARTIST HAVING EXPERIENCED A TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
CREATES ARTFUL PORTRAITS TO HONOR OTHER TBI
SURVIVORS:**

**GEORGE CLOONEY, KEITH RICHARDS, CONGRESSWOMAN
GABRIELLE GIFFORDS, TRISHA MEILI, THE “CENTRAL PARK
JOGGER,” AND MANY MORE**

**PAINTINGS REVEAL AMAZING RESILIENCE AND PROCESS OF HEALING
Exhibition Opens March 15 at the MSB Gallery at NYU Langone Medical Center**



New York, NY (March 2, 2012) — Artist Eliette Markhbein, who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in 2004 after being struck by a speeding car, showcases a series of larger-than-life paintings of TBI survivors who became role models for their peers, including stars George Clooney and Keith Richards; Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords; ABC-TV news correspondent Bob Woodruff; Army Specialist Claudia Carreon, an Iraqi War veteran; athletes and NFL Hall of Famer Troy Aikman and NHL Hall of Famer Pat Lafontaine; Alexis Verzal, a spirited 5-year-old who was shaken at 14 months; Trisha Meili, the “Central Park Jogger”; and Timothy Pruce, Vice President, Brain Injury Association of New York State

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Keith Richards, 2011, Charcoal on paper, acrylic on canvas, 66x72; *Alexis Verzal*, 2010 Charcoal on paper, acrylic on canvas, 66x66; *Trisha Meili*, 2012 Charcoal on paper, acrylic on canvas, 60x60

The exhibition, **WHACK'ed ... and then everything was different**, opens March 15 and will be on view until April 15, 2012, at the MSB Gallery at NYU Langone Medical Center, 550 First Avenue in NYC. The opening reception on March 15 from 6:00pm-8:00pm is sponsored by the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Markhbein's stunning portraits are creative reinterpretations of photos often provided by the survivors, and are accompanied by moving stories. TBI survivor George Clooney, for instance, who, while shooting a scene for the film *Syriana* tore his dura mater, a layer that surrounds the brain and holds the spinal fluid, suffered such horrific pain and serious memory loss after the accident that he contemplated suicide to escape his terror. "It was the most unbearable pain I've ever been through, literally where you'd go, well, you'll have to kill yourself at some point, you can't live like this," Clooney stated in an interview in 2005.

The exhibition also features a portrait of Claudia Carreon, a service member who, while deployed in Iraq suffered an accident she does not recall. She does not remember either being pregnant, giving birth or being a mother. Carreon, who was demoted for not obeying orders – a result of her memory loss due to her TBI – is one of an estimated 320,000 servicemen and women having sustained a TBI in Iraq and Afghanistan. Markhbein imploded an American flag over her portrait

Particularly moving is the story of 5 year old Alexis Verzal, who was violently shaken and thrown by her day-care provider when only 14 months old, causing a TBI. After 10 days in a coma, Alexis slowly awoke lacking any abilities she had prior to her injury. She was blind, unable to talk, to move her arms or legs, eat or drink. After nearly 2000 hours of rehabilitation, Alexis is thriving. She is an outgoing, happy, determined and increasingly independent five-year-old. Her intense dedication to recovery inspired comedian Larry the Cable Guy to donate \$1.2 million in 2009 to build a new facility in Lincoln, Nebraska, named the Alexis Verzal Children's Rehabilitation Hospital at Madonna.

Markhbein's unique technique is a silent testimony to the three phases of TBI: fractured – reassembled – whole. Using cropped photographs, Markhbein first draws the portrait in charcoal on paper. She then imperfectly cuts the drawing into squares and reassembles them as portraits on painted canvas. The uneven grid effect that results from the drawing/cutting/collage technique illustrates how TBI disrupts sensory and perceptual processes. The grid also acts as a metaphor for the support and structure TBI survivors require to live an active and rewarding life.

"By representing faces of TBI survivors on a large scale, I hope to elicit emotional intimacy and universality," says Markhbein. On September 3rd, 2004, Eliette Markhbein, on her way back from work, was propelled in the air after being struck by a speeding car and arched over the street and parked cars. The collision shattered the driver's windshield, passenger window, and side mirror. Markhbein survived with a TBI and injuries to her spine. The course of her life and that of her husband changed forever.

She began to paint during her recovery, using art as a healing force. And art has changed her life. Today, 8 years after her nearly fatal accident, Markhbein, who was a world traveled journalist for 25 years, is an accomplished painter. She is also an advocate for TBI, raising awareness of this chronic disease. In 2006 she founded a Therapeutic Arts Program to facilitate painting for TBI patients and sustain them through the many stages of their rehabilitation and recovery. Markhbein is the recipient of the 2010 Society for the Arts and Healthcare "Practice Award" and the 2011 National Rehabilitation Association Metro chapter "Nelson A. Voorhees Award". Read more about Markhbein at www.biausa.org/tbi-portrait-project and www.eliettemarkhbein.racheldeutsch.com

Based on her experience and the success of using art as a modality for the rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury patients, Markhbein partnered with the Brain Injury Association of America and the Society for the Arts in Healthcare to tour the exhibition around the country to educate the public about TBI. After the tour, Markhbein will donate the paintings to these organizations to support a nationwide Artists-in-Residence pilot program to serve TBI patients in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities.

With so many of our troops coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan with a TBI, Markhbein's initiative is timely and inspiring. She follows in the footsteps of artists who offered their services after World War II to help heal traumatized soldiers coming back from the front.

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WHACK'ed ... and then everything was different

March 15 – April 15, 2012

MSB Gallery

NYU Langone Medical Center

550 First Avenue at 32nd Street, New York, NY

Gallery Hours:

Mon-Sun, 10am-6pm